

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4625

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ETRD HK

SUBJECT: NON-RUBBER FOOTWEAR STATISTICAL INFORMATION

REF: A) STATE 85744, B) HONG KONG 2351

1. HONG KONG'S FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY RECEIVES RELATIVELY LITTLE ATTENTION FROM GOVERNMENT-EITHER FROM HKG PRODUCTION MONITORING UNITS OR FROM OFFICIAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION GROUPS. GOVERNMENT COLLECTS NO FOOTWEAR PRODUCTION OR CAPACITY STATISTICS, ONLY EXPORT STATISTICS. GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE BUSINESS SPOKESMAN ESTIMATE THAT NEARLY 80 PERCENT (BY VALUE) OF HONG KONG'S TOTAL FOOTWEAR PRODUCTION IS CONSUMED DOMESTICALLY, WITH THE 20 PERCENT EXPORTED CONSISTING MAINLY OF RUBBER AND RUBBER/FABRIC SHOES AND SANDALS.

2. SINCE 1972, FOOTWEAR (ALL TYPES) FACTORIES HAVE CONSISTENLY REPRESENTED LESS THAN 2 PERCENT OF HONG KONG'S TOTAL MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENTS. PERSONS EMPLOYED IN FOOTWEAR MANUFACTURING HAVE AVERAGED BETWEEN 1 AND 2 PERCENT OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS, OR A BARELY MEASURABLE .5-.6 PERCENT OF HONG KONG'S

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TOTAL LABOR FORCE. ACCORDING TO MOST RECENT (DECEMBER '71) STUDY OF HONG KONG FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY, DONE BY SEMI-OFFICIAL "HK PRODUCTIVITY CENTRE", FACTORIES MAKING NON-RUBBER FOOTWEAR CHIEFLY LEATHER, TEXTILE FABRIC OR PRV SHOES AND SHIPPERS TEND TO BE VERY SMALL OPERATIONS, EMPLOYING LESS THAN 20 PERSONS AND USING ONLY MINIMAL MACHINERY. IN PRODUCTION RUBBER FOOTWEAR SOME ECONOMIES OF SCALE ARE REALIZED: BUT EVEN IN THIS

SECTOR, 1971 DATA SHOW LESS THAN 4 PERCENT OF THE FACTORIES EMPLOYED MORE THAN 200 PERSONS. HKG AND PRODUCTIVITY CENTER OFFICIALS CONSIDER 1971 ANALYSES OF FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY STILL VALID.

3. PERCENTAGES CITED PARA 2 SUGGEST THAT HK FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY CAPACITY HAS REMAINED RELATIVELY STAGNANT OVER LAST FIVE YEARS. HKG AND MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION OFFICIALS HAVE NOT NOTICED ANY SIGNIFICANT NEW INVESTMENT IN FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY SINCE LATE 1960S WHEN SOME RUBBER FOOTWEAR MAKERS UPGRADED EQUIPMENT. ONE HKG TRADE OFFICER COMMENTED THAT FOOTWEAR HAS A VERY LOW PRIORITY IN HKG'S EXPORT PROMOTION AND INVESTMENT ATTRACTION PROGRAMS. HKG OFFICER RECALLED ONLY ONE MAJOR POTENTIAL INVESTOR IN NON-RUBBER FOOTWEAR HAVING VISITED HK IN LAST FIVE YEARS; HE LEFT FOR ITALY SOMEWHAT SURPRISED AT UNSOPHISTICATED INDUSTRY HERE AND DETERMINED TO INVEST ELSEWHERE.

4. FULL STATISTICAL DATA REQUESTED REFTEL A NOT YET AVAILABLE BUT WILL BE CABLED AS SOON AS HKG FINAL 1976 EXPORT FIGURES ARE PUBLISHED, PROBABLY WITHIN ONE WEEK. PARTIAL DATA TRANSMITTED REFTEL B.
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